

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 09418 01 OF 02 220644Z

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 EUR-25 AF-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

CCO-00 EB-11 OMB-01 SR-02 ORM-03 AID-20 DPW-01 DRC-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 617

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 9418

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS

SUBJ: MRS MEIR'S MEETINGS WITH CODELS ROSENTHAL AND

STRATTON

SUMMARY. PRIMIN MEIR, IN MEETINGS WITH CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS NOVEMBER 19-20, OFFERED HER VIEWS ON BROAD RANGE OF CURRENT TOPICS INCLUDING: US OR INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES, US TROOP COMMITMENT, SOVIET MIDDLE EAST ROLE, STATUS OF SYRIAN-HELD POWS, IMPLEMENTATION OF SIX POINT AGREEMENT, TIMING OF PEACE CONFERENCE, POSSIBLE TERRITORIAL ADJUSTMENTS, IMPLICATIONS OF OIL BOYCOTT, PALESTINIAN REFUGEE PROBLEM, US PEACE-KEEPING ROLE AND ISRAELI DOMESTIC SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

1. IN COURSE OF TWO MEETINGS WITH VISITING CONGRESSMEN NOV 19-20, MRS MEIR OUTLINED HER VIEWS ON WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES CONNECTED WITH WAR, CEASEFIRE AND
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 09418 01 OF 02 220644Z

NEGOTIATING PROSPECTS. MAIN POINTS ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW:

2. US OR INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES. MRS MEIR OBSERVED

THAT WHOEVER PROPOSES SUCH GUARANTEES BELIEVES THAT (A) ISRAEL'S FUTURE BORDERS WILL NOT BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR IT TO DEFEND ITSELF AND (B) EVEN AFTER A PEACE AGREEMENT IS SIGNED, THE ARABS MAY DECIDE TO ATTACK ISRAEL AGAIN. IT WOULD BE THE "GREATEST TRAGEDY TO ISRAEL" IF TIME WOULD COME WHEN IT COULD BE ATTACKED AND UNABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF. ISRAEL, IS SUCH AN EVENTUALITY, WOULD HAVE LOST NOT JUST A WAR BUT "SOMETHING DEEPER AND MORE PRECIOUS." MRS MEIR SAID THAT SHE REALIZED THAT THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS ABSOLUTELY SECURE BORDERS. NONETHELESS, ISRAEL'S FUTURE BORDERS (A) OUGHT TO PROVIDE "A CERTAIN ELEMENT OF DETERRENT" AND (B) OUGHT TO ENABLE IT TO PROTECT ITSELF IN CASE OF ATTACK WITH AS FEW CASUALTIES AS POSSIBLE. THESE CONSIDERATIONS WERE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT SINCE, IN HER JUDGMENT, PEACE TREATIES WITH ARAB LEADERS WERE NOT WORTH MUCH.

3. US TROOP COMMITMENT. MRS MEIR NEITHER EXPECTED NOR WANTED US TROOP INTERVENTION IN FUTURE. IF ISRAEL EVER HAD TO REQUEST SUCH SUPPORT, IT WOULD BE "BLACKEST DAY IN HISTORY OF STATE" SINCE IT WOULD REPRESENT ADMISSION THAT ISRAEL WAS UNABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF ANY LONGER.

4. SOVIET ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST. MRS MEIR EXPLAINED RUSSIAN INTEREST IN MIDEAST AS DERIVING FROM CENTURIES-OLD EXPANSIONIST AMBITIONS. AS REGARDS CURRENT WAR, GOI TOOK SOVIET THREATS REGARDING POSSIBLE DIRECT MILITARY INVOLVEMENT SERIOUSLY. SOVIETS HAD INVESTED TOO MUCH IN ARAB STATES (10 BILLION DOLLARS IN MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM 1961-1971) TO LET ARABS GO DOWN IN DEFEAT.

5. SYRIAN-HELD POW'S. GOI THOUGHT IT COULD GET BACK POWS BY RECOGNIZING SARG'S VITAL INTEREST IN ALLOWING RETURN OF 15,000 CIVILIANS TO THEIR VILLAGES. HOWEVER, WHEN SUCH EXCHANGE HAD BEEN PROPOSED BY SYRIA THROUGH ICRC AND ACCEPTED BY ISRAEL, SYRIA BACKED OFF.

6. PEACE PROSPECTS. MRS MEIR BELIEVED THAT, DESPITE NOMINAL CEASEFIRE, CONDITIONS FOR PEACE WERE NOT IDEAL.
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 09418 01 OF 02 220644Z

EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN ARMIES STILL HAD MORE ARMAMENTS AND MANPOWER THAN EVER BEFORE ON THEIR BORDERS. CURRENT CEASEFIRE LINES IN SINAI, IN WHICH CONFLICTING PARTIES WERE ON BOTH SIDES OF CANAL AT CLOSE RANGE TO EACH OTHER, INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF RENEWED HOSTILITIES. SPORADIC FIGHTING CONTINUED DAILY. ON SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC NOTE, MRS MEIR OBSERVED THAT FOR FIRST TIME IN 25 YEARS THERE WERE NOW DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY BETWEEN ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS.

THIS WAS POSSIBLE BECAUSE BOTH SIDES HAD A VITAL INTEREST IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SIX POINT AGREEMENT. SHE DID NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE HAD BEEN EGYPTIAN "CHANGE OF HEART;" EGYPTIAN GENERAL SPOKE OF ABSENCE OF HOSTILITIES RATHER THAN RECONCILIATION.

7. PEACE CONFERENCE. MRS MEIR SAID THAT NOBODY WITH "DEMOCRATIC BACKGROUND" SHOULD EXPECT GOI TO GO TO PEACE CONFERENCE TWO WEEKS BEFORE NATIONAL ELECTIONS. IF WORLD HAS WAITED 25 YEARS ALREADY, IT CAN WAIT ANOTHER 5-6 WEEKS UNTIL ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS NEW MANDATE.

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 09418 02 OF 02 220641Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 9418

8. ISRAELI POSITION ON NEGOTIATIONS. MRS MEIR, AFTER EMPHASIZING THAT GOI HAS NOT YET FORMALIZED OFFICIAL POSITION ON TERRITORIAL ISSUES, OFFERED FOLLOWING PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: (A) IN SINAI, ISRAEL WOULD BE PREPARED TO RETURN SUEZ CANAL, WHICH IT RECOGNIZED AS VITAL AND LEGITIMATE EGYPTIAN INTEREST. ISRAEL WOULD INSIST ON RETAINING SHARM-EL-SHEIKH AND AN

UNDEFINED LAND STRIP BETWEEN THAT POINT AND ISRAEL.

(B) ISRAEL WOULD NOT GO DOWN FROM GOLAN HEIGHTS. HOWEVER, ISSUE OF WHERE FUTURE BORDERS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND SYRIA OUGHT TO BE WAS "EASILY NEGOTIABLE."

(C) ON WEST BANK, ISRAEL WAS PREPARED TO GIVE POPULATED AREAS BACK TO JORDAN WHILE RETAINING CONTROL OF UNPOPULATED AREA ALONGSIDE JORDAN RIVER. ISRAEL FURTHER WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE LAND CORRIDOR BETWEEN POPULATED AREAS AND JORDAN.

(D) JERUSALEM COULD NOT BE DIVIDED AGAIN. HOWEVER, ISRAEL HAD NO AMBITION TO ADMINISTER HOLY PLACES WHICH WOULD REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 09418 02 OF 02 220641Z

UNDER CONTROL OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES.

9. OIL BOYCOTT. MRS MEIR SAID THAT EUROPEANS ARE IN DIFFICULT SITUATION WHICH SHE DID NOT WANT TO MINIMIZE. BUT, THEY HAD TO REALIZE THAT CURRENT OIL BOYCOTT WAS ONLY FIRST STEP, AND THAT ARABS WERE NOW DICTATING WHAT OUGHT TO BE NATURE OF INTRA-EUROPEAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS. DIFFICULTY WITH BLACKMAIL, SHE OBSERVED IS THAT YOU ONLY KNOW WHERE YOU BEGIN; YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE YOU WILL END UP.

10. PALESTINIAN REFUGEES. MRS MEIR REITERATED HER WELL-KNOWN VIEW THAT PALESTINIANS HAD "DESERTED US IN 1947," THAT ARAB STATES HAD DELIBERATELY LEFT REFUGEE PROBLEM UNRESOLVED, AND CONTRASTED GOOD ISRAELI TREATMENT OF JEWISH REFUGEES FROM AFRICA AND NEAR EAST WITH ARAB'S INADEQUATE TREATMENT OF PALESTINIANS.

11. UN PEACEKEEPING ROLE. MRS MEIR EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM, BASED ON ISRAEL'S PAST EXPERIENCE, THAT UNEF COULD CONSTITUTE MEANINGFUL PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN FUTURE.

12. INTERNAL SCENE. ISRAEL WAS GOING THROUGH DIFFICULT PERIOD. CURRENT WAR HAD BEEN CRUELEST EVER. THERE HAD BEEN SERIOUS MISTAKES IN INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS. MRS MEIR FULLY SUPPORTED ESTABLISHMENT OF INQUIRY COMMISSION WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE WOULD BE, NOT TO PUNISH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAST SHORTCOMINGS, BUT RATHER TO ASSURE THAT ISRAEL WOULD NEVER FIND ITSELF IN COMPARABLE SITUATION AGAIN.

13. COMMENT. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH MRS MEIR AND OTHER ISRAELIS, I HAVE NOTED THAT IT WAS MY PERSONAL OPINION THAT SECRETARY'S REMARKS ON GUARANTEES SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS COMPLEMENTARY TO RATHER THAN AS SUBSTITUTE FOR SECURE BORDERS. INDEED, HAIM ZADOK, CHAIRMAN KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE, MADE EXACTLY SAME POINT IN HIS SPEECH AT THE LUNCHEON TENDERED TO THE STRATTON SUBCOMMITTEE ON NOV 20.

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